

FRAMEWORKS FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

OPEN THE FRONT DOOR (OTFD)

(adapted from a presentation by Dr. Tasha Souza, Humboldt State University)

Observe

Think

Feel

Desire

O=OBSERVE

- Concrete, objective, factual observations
- Be able to agree on the observations stated
I notice some raised eyebrows and other nonverbals that make me think people might be reacting strongly to something that was said.

T=THINK

- Thoughts based on observations
- Aiming to NOT put the other person on defense
I think we should pause for a moment and discuss this...

F=FEEL

- Actual feelings/emotions you have as a result of the conflict/observation
...because I feel uncomfortable moving forward, given the commitment we've made to ensuring that everyone's voices are heard during our meetings.

D=DESIRE

- A statement of desired outcome
I'm hoping someone is willing to share what they are thinking or feeling right now so that we can have a productive conversation.

CONVERSATION SENTENCE STARTERS

Source: <http://www.mediate.com/articles/ringerj1.cfm>

"I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively."

"I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view."

"I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?"

"I think we have different perceptions about _____. I'd like to hear your thinking on this."

"I'd like to talk about _____. I think we may have different ideas on how to _____."

"I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well."

SAFE SENTENCE STARTERS FOR SENSITIVE DISCUSSIONS

Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/resolution-not-conflict/201201/6-safe-sentence-starters-sensitive-discussions>

Starter #1: I feel/felt _____.

Example: *“I feel confused about what you said about Black communities during the board meeting.”*

Note: feelings are one word or phrase. More than one word or phrase is probably a thought, not a feeling. If you have begun “I feel that...”, you are sharing information but you are not sharing a feeling.

Note also that some feelings will be received more easily than others. Vulnerable feelings like *confused*, *anxious*, *concerned*, or *sad* have higher odds of engendering cooperation than threatening words like *angry*, *mad*, or even *frustrated*.

Starter #2: My concern is/was _____.

“My concern is that your statement perpetuates many stereotypes, which we know many families we serve are trying to overcome.”

Understanding each others’ concerns sets you up to find good solutions, solutions that work for both of you.

Starter #3: I would like to _____.

“I would like to understand what you were trying to communicate by what you said, and also share my perspectives on how it impacted me and some others in the room.”

Note: Be sure to avoid I *would like you to...* Telling each other what to do is a losing strategy, likely to engender resentment rather than cooperation.

Sentence starter #4: How/What do you feel/think about that idea?

“How would you feel about having a conversation with me regarding what you said at the board meeting? I noticed that several people had reactions to your comment, but I didn’t feel that we took the time to really discuss it last night. It seems important to address given our board’s new commitment to racial equity.”

Symmetry is vital in sensitive conversations. The fourth starter, a question, invites the listener to share her/his perspective.